now? He supposed his plantation, having been in Sherman's track, was all devastated, his buildings ruined, and his slaves gone. Some of them, he hoped, would come back to him after his return, because he had always treated his slaves well, never having lost any except one, and him by "congestive fever." But what could he do after all this ruination? There was a tone of resigned helplessness in his speech.

I suggested that if many of his former slaves were found still within reach, he might, as other planters did, make fair contracts with them and set them to work as free laborers.

This remark stirred him. He became animated. There was even a slight flurry of excitement in his voice. What? Contracts with those niggers? It would never work. Yes, he had heard of that emancipation business. He knew that was the intention. But—and here he approached me with an air of confidentiality as if to coax my secret, true opinion out of me—now, really, did I think that this was a settled thing? Now, he could tell me that niggers would not work unless compelled to. A free nigger was never good for anything. He knew the thing would not work. No Southern man would expect it to work. No use trying. I sought to convince him that the emancipation of the slaves was indeed a settled thing, and that the Southern people would have to try the introduction of free labor. He sighed and in a polite way gave me to understand that he could not believe it. He knew the

nigger. He knew how unfit the nigger was for freedom. Why, was not President Johnson a Southern man, and did he not know equally well that the nigger would not work without compulsion? Contract! No nigger knew what a contract, was and would never keep one unless forced to.

I remarked in vain that I had seen reports of the successful working of the contract system in some instances. He